

Audio Takes a Hit in UK Time Spent amid the Pandemic

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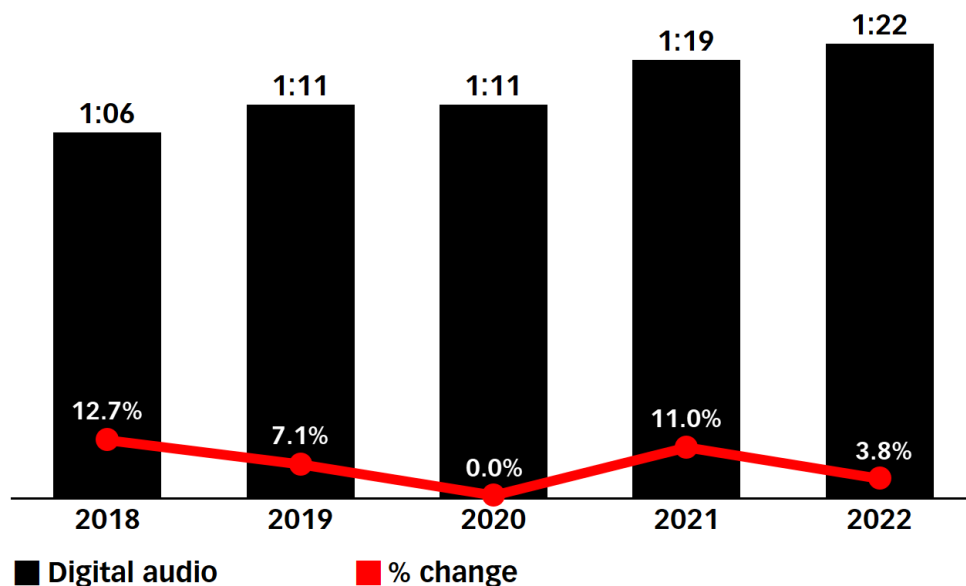
Bill Fisher

With UK adults having so much time on their hands, it's perhaps surprising to see audio struggling to hit the same, or at least similar, heights as video. However, with commuting (a key listening environment) essentially nixed, maybe this was to be expected after all.

Time spent with traditional broadcast radio is set for a marked slowdown in 2020—down 6.8% over 2019. People aren't necessarily eschewing radio altogether; rather, they're switching their means of accessing it.

Digital Audio: Average Time Spent in the UK, 2018-2022

hrs:mins per day among population and % change



Note: ages 18+; time spent with each medium includes all time spent with that medium, regardless of multitasking; includes radio stations with professional or amateur/DJs editors selecting playlists; automated (i.e., without human editors/DJs) playlists; streamed services that create playlists based on user preferences of artists, tracks or genres; personally configured (i.e., set by the listener) playlists; music or other audio content delivered within a website or app (e.g., AM/FM online streams); or audio podcasts (streamed or downloaded); excludes other downloaded audio files (e.g., music MP3s) and digital terrestrial and satellite radio services that are delivered over the air (i.e., DAB)

Source: eMarketer, April 2020

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March figures from some of the UK's largest radio owners—Global and Bauer—indicated that connected listening was up substantially amid the pandemic. However, even with this added impetus from digital radio, we forecast that digital audio experienced flat growth among UK adults—average daily time spent of 1 hour, 11 minutes (1:11) in 2019 won't budge this year.

According to April 2020 data from media insights firm Midia Research, the lockdown may have subtly altered listeners' consumption habits. In a blog post, the firm's managing director, Mark Mulligan, stated that "streaming volumes were almost universally down across all regions.

... Most labels, though, pointed to a strong rise in YouTube and Vevo streams, indicating that when stationary at home, many consumers prefer a visual music experience.”

One particular video conduit has certainly experienced a strong uptake in music-related consumption. April research from Channel Factory, a global technology platform and official YouTube partner, found that consumers were heading to YouTube for “uplifting” content, and that usually meant music videos. The UK study found that 55.5% of respondents said they’d been watching music videos and performances on the platform in the past two weeks—a larger proportion than cited in any other category.

With Spotify announcing a slight dip in global streams in mid-March and podcast analytics firm Podtrac showing that podcast listening was down substantially in March (US figures, but likely indicative of a wider global trend), it does appear that the current preference is for a melding of audio and visual into one.

For more insights on time spent with media in the UK, eMarketer PRO subscribers can read our recent report:

Report by Bill Fisher May 06, 2020

UK Time Spent with Media 2020



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